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FSIS BACKGROUNDER

December 1994

Slightly Revised

FSIS Permits Meat Produced by Advanced Meat and Bone Separation Machinery To Be Labeled as "Meat"

The Food Safety and Inspection Service is amending the federal meat inspection regulations to allow meat produced by advanced meat and bone separation machinery to be labeled as "*beef*" or "*pork*," for example, instead of "*mechanically separated beef or pork*."

- FSIS has determined that the meat produced by the high-tech machinery is comparable in appearance, texture and composition to meat trimmings and similar meat products and can be fairly identified as "*meat*."
- The advanced meat and bone separation machinery does not crush or grind bones to remove skeletal tissues from bones like machinery used to produce mechanically separated meat.
- To produce mechanically separated meat, machinery crushes and pulverizes bone and forces the bone and tissue through high pressure systems to separate bone from the tissues. The final product with a spread-like consistency contains powdered bone, including bone marrow and certain minerals not permitted in "*meat*."
- To ensure that advanced systems are operating with good manufacturing practices, the final rule limits the calcium content in the meat produced to no more than 150 milligrams/100 grams. Products that exceed the calcium content limit must be labeled "*mechanically separated meat*," i.e., "*beef or pork*."
- About 50 or 60 establishments have advanced meat and bone separation machinery. The machinery processes about 1 to 1 1/2 pounds more beef from carcasses than hand-deboning operations.
- It is estimated that net benefits from implementation of the final labeling rule would be over \$30 million in the first year.

Monitoring Calcium Content

- FSIS is requiring manufacturers to maintain a testing program and recordkeeping to ensure products meet calcium content criteria.
- One 1-pound sample should be collected from each production lot and analyzed for calcium. A lot is one continuous shift for up to 12 hours of production.
- If a sample has more than 0.18 percent or 180 milligrams (mg) of calcium, three additional samples from that lot must be analyzed. Sample results must show that the "*meat*" contains 0.15 percent calcium or less.

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CATALOGING PREP.

- If test samples are above the calcium limits established by FSIS, three samples will be taken from each lot until five consecutive production lots have results less than or equal to 0.15 percent.
- Product found in noncompliance—above 0.03 percent or 30 mg. or greater than 0.18 percent or 180 mg.—must be labeled “*mechanically separated meat*.”

Rulemaking Process

- On March 3, 1994, FSIS published a proposal, seeking public comment on amending the definition of meat to include as “*meat*” produced by advanced meat and bone separation machinery.

— Thirty comments were received—15 from consumers, nine from manufacturers/distributors, four from trade associations, one from a member of academia, and one from a machinery manufacturer. A majority of commenters supported the proposed rule.
- The final rule was scheduled to be published in the December 6, 1994 Federal Register. The rule goes into effect January 5, 1995.

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